Successful Practices in ADA Para Transit Services

Miami-Dade County

Office of Performance Improvement

July 2001

Project Impetus

- May 22, 2001 presentation by the Cross Disability Transportation Issues Committee to the Board of County Commissioners

- Decision by current broker (ATC Intelitran) to terminate contract by April 2002

Project Scope

- OPI was asked to perform a Best Practices analysis:
  - No standard definition of industry terminology
  - High degree of variation in service delivery among jurisdictions:
    - Demographics, geography, traffic conditions
    - Level of service provided
    - Program policy and procedure
  - No industry consensus on Best Practices
- A review of <u>Successful Practices</u> was performed

Project Objectives

- Identify successful practices that have worked for riders and providers in jurisdictions nationwide

- Emphasize solutions to the rider service issues identified

- Develop recommendations

Project Methodology

- Identify key issues through meetings with stakeholders:
  - Miami-Dade Transit Agency
  - Miami-Dade County Office of ADA Coordination
  - User advocate groups
    - Cross Disability Transportation Issues
    - Commission on Disability Issues (CODI)
    - Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)
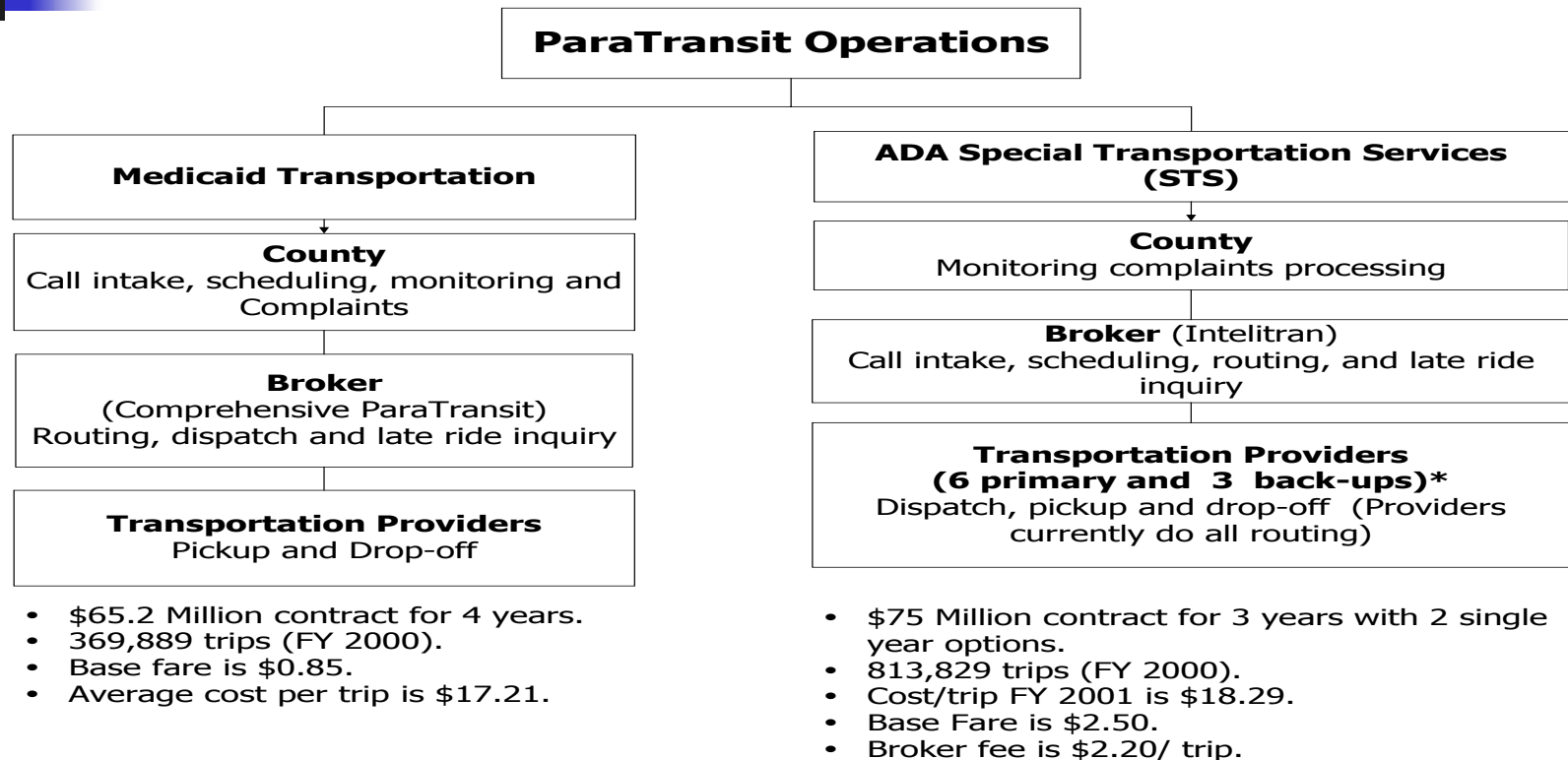 - ATC Intelitran (Broker) and transportation providers

Project Methodology, cont.

- Review national industry trends and successful practices
  - Transit Cooperative Research Program
  - Federal Transportation Administration
  - American Public Transportation Association
- Review applicable national, state and local legislation and regulations
- Review past County audits of STS
- Survey 86 randomly selected STS customers
- Conduct survey of 25 jurisdictions

Para Transit Operations

ParaTransit Operations

Medicaid Transportation

County
Call intake, scheduling, monitoring and Complaints

Broker
(Comprehensive ParaTransit)
Routing, dispatch and late ride inquiry

Transportation Providers
Pickup and Drop-off

- $65.2 Million contract for 4 years.
- 369,889 trips (FY 2000).
- Base fare is $0.85.
- Average cost per trip is $17.21.

ADA Special Transportation Services (STS)

County
Monitoring complaints processing

Broker (Intelitran)
Call intake, scheduling, routing, and late ride inquiry

Transportation Providers
(6 primary and 3 back-ups)*
Dispatch, pickup and drop-off (Providers currently do all routing)

- $75 Million contract for 3 years with 2 single year options.
- 813,829 trips (FY 2000).
- Cost/trip FY 2001 is $18.29.
- Base Fare is $2.50.
- Broker fee is $2.20/ trip.

* Providers: American Medical Coach, Handivan, Minority Mobil Systems, William R. Perry Transport, Zuni Transport, Super Nice Limo. Backup providers: Key Island, Super Yellow Cab, Marlen Trujillo Co.
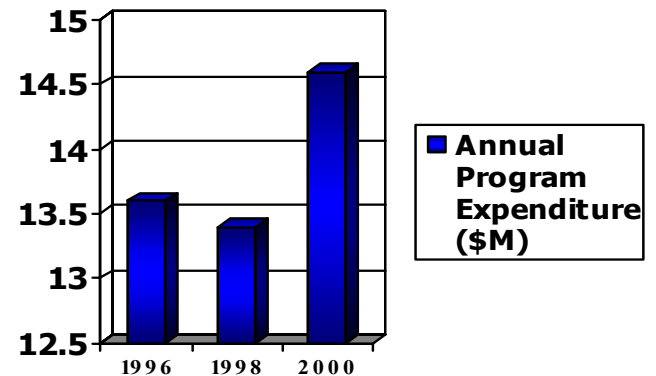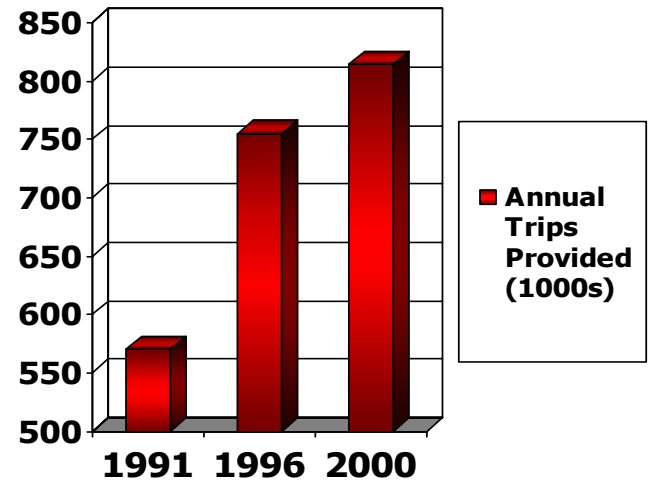
ADA Requirements
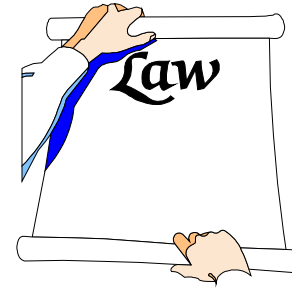
1. STS must operate during the same hours as fixed routes on any route
   - *Miami-Dade County exceeds standard*

2. STS network should exceed the comparable fixed route by ¾ mile
   - *Miami-Dade County exceeds standard*

3. Trip requests are to be honored irrespective of trip purpose
   - *Miami-Dade County meets standard*

4. Fares cannot be more than twice the fixed route fare
   - *Miami-Dade County meets standard*

5. Reservations may be made 1 to 14 days in advance during business hours. Same day and 1-hour reservations should be provided
   - *Miami-Dade County meets standard*

6. There should be no capacity constraints in providing eligible trips
   - *Further investigation is required to determine level of compliance*

STS Service Utilization in Miami-Dade County

- Currently, there are approximately 16,000 eligible riders in the County; roughly 10,000 used the service last year

- Ridership increased 43% since 1991, from 570,000 trips to 814,000 trips in 2000

- Annual program cost increased from $13.6 million in FY 1996 to $14.6 million in FY 2000

- The average cost per trip decreased to $17.91 in FY 2000 from $18.03 in FY 1996

- Through March 2001, average cost per trip cost rose to $18.29

Annual Trips Provided (1000s) — bar chart for years 1991, 1996, 2000

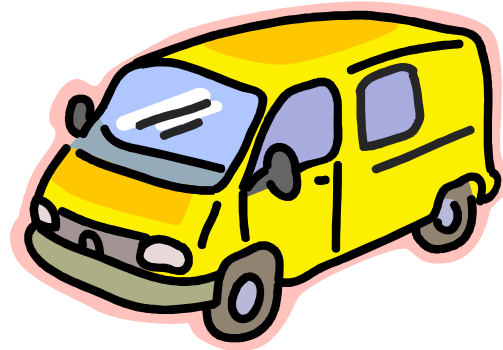**Annual Program Expenditure ($M)** — bar chart for years 1996, 1998, 2000

STS Service Delivery

- The County contracts service delivery to a broker, ATC Intelitran (formerly COMSIS) who acts as the County representative. The broker provides no passenger pick-up/drop off services

- Intelitran contracts with six transportation providers and three back-up providers

- On April 26, 2001 Intelitran formally announced its intention to terminate the broker contract for STS in the County, effective April 26, 2002

# STS Service Delivery Roles

- Miami-Dade Transit Agency:
  - Determines rider eligibility
  - Monitors contract performance
  - Responds to formal complaints
- Broker:
  - Takes reservation requests and schedules rides
  - Responds to late ride inquiries
  - Manages transportation provider performance
- Transportation Providers:
  - Design routes in their respective zones (new)
  - Transport riders

STS Complaint Ratio, (1996-2001)

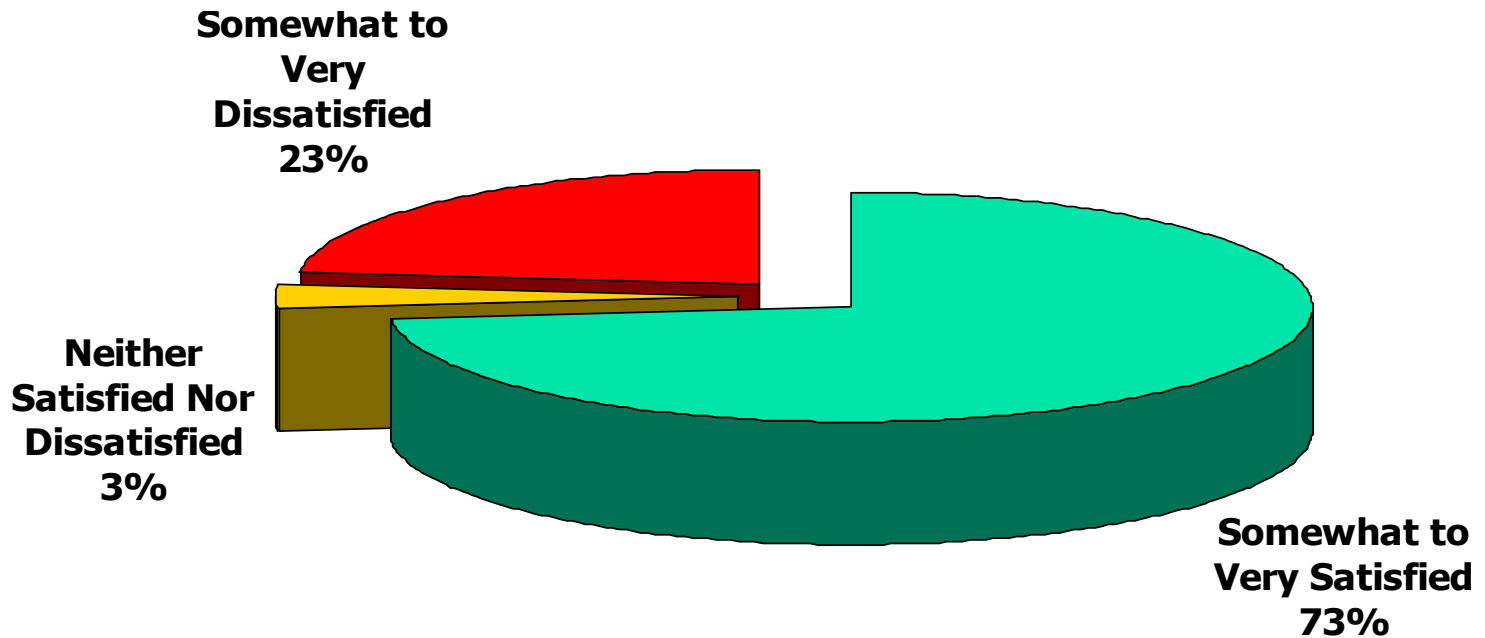*In FY 2001, 77% of complaints were related to poor on-time performance*
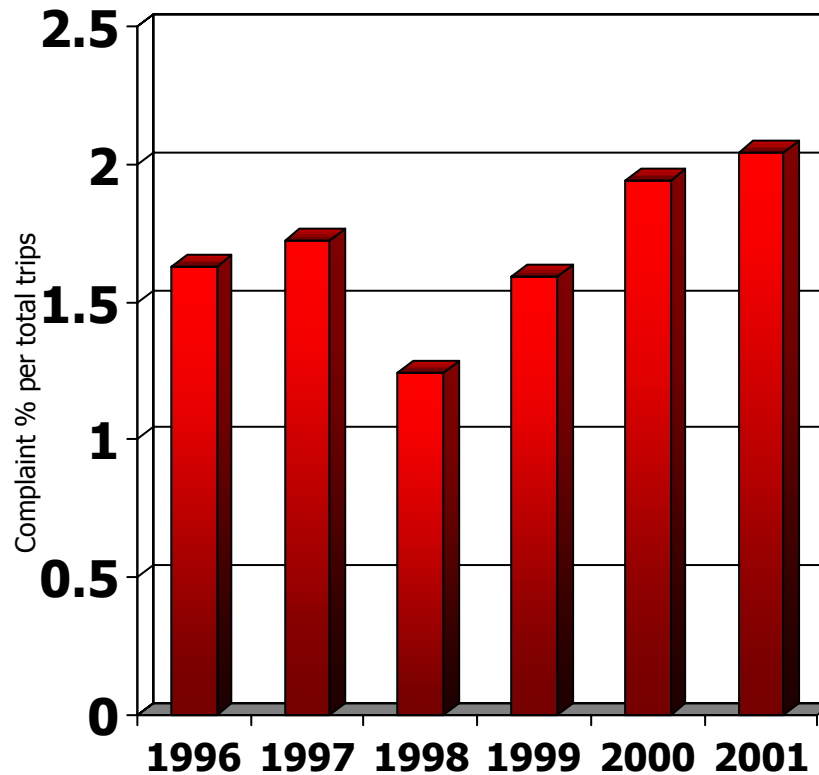
Trip complaint percentage per fiscal year

STS Customer Survey

- Limited sample size
- 100 users selected at random from STS client database
  - 80% ambulatory, 20% non-ambulatory
  - Participants chosen from across the County
- 86 riders contacted
- 30 responses received

Customer Survey Results - Level of Satisfaction

Somewhat to Very Dissatisfied 23%

Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied 3%

Somewhat to Very Satisfied 73%

Customer Survey Results (cont.)

- What customers like <u>most</u> about STS service:
  - Driver Courtesy
  - Price of Fare
  - Ease of making reservation

- What customers like <u>least</u> about STS service:
  - Pick-up time
  - Drop-off time
  - Lengthy Routing
  - Driver Courtesy
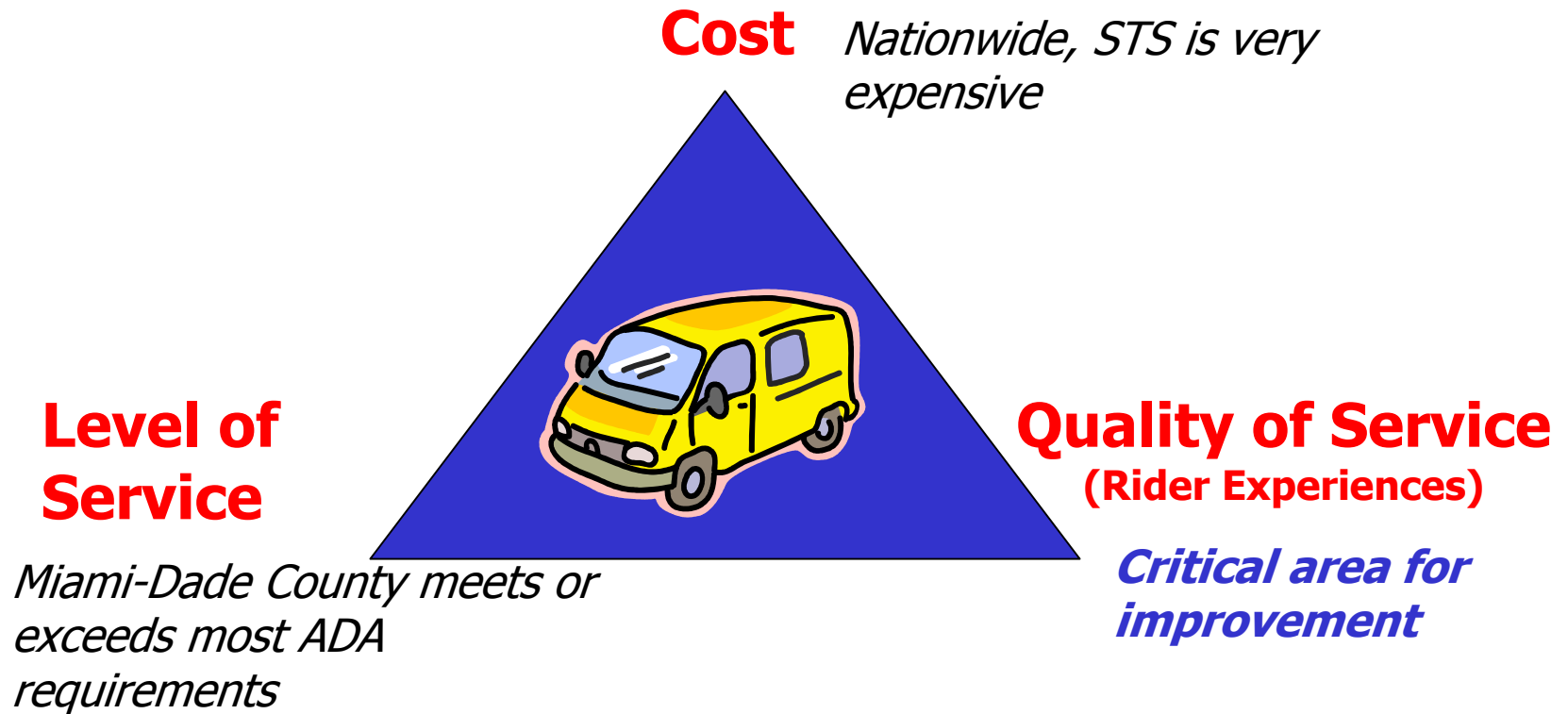
STS Customer Survey Results

- **Examples of Positive Feedback**
  - 'I find the service very convenient'
  - 'The drivers help me down stairs and take packages up for me. It's a wonderful service for the community'
  - 'The drivers are nice'

- **Examples of Negative Feedback**
  - 'I was picked up late and missed a doctor's appointment'
  - 'Sometimes the van is 1 1/2 to 2 hours late'
  - 'My wheelchair was not properly secured. I was thrown out of my chair and had to ride on the ground for 2 1/2 hours. I was treated impolitely when I called about the incident and there was no follow-up'

Key Issues in Para Transit Service Delivery

Cost *Nationwide, STS is very expensive*

Level of Service

Quality of Service
(Rider Experiences)

Miami-Dade County meets or exceeds most ADA requirements

Critical area for improvement

Stakeholders' Issues

- Scheduling and on-time performance
- Rider Safety and Comfort
- Operations oversight and corrective action
- Business model and division of responsibilities
- Driver training, responsibilities and pay
- General customer service quality
- Equality of access when compared to fixed-route mass transit
- STS Fares

18

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- Survey of 25 Jurisdictions around the country
    - Program service levels
    - Program organizational structure
    - Program budget
    - Program successful practices
- Jurisdiction Selection Process
    - Operational complexity similar to Miami-Dade
    - 'Best in class' para transit program

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- Jurisdictions interviewed included:

Boston, Massachusetts
Charleston, South Carolina
Chicago, Illinois
Dallas, Texas
Denver, Colorado
Broward County, Florida
Palm Beach County, Florida
Los Angeles County, California
Miami-Dade County, Florida
Minneapolis, Minnesota Metro Region

New York, New York
Orlando, Florida Metro Region
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Providence, Rhode Island
San Jose, California Metro Region
Seattle, Washington Metro Region
Hillsborough County, Florida
Washington D.C. Metro Region

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- Survey results
  - Average number para transit riders: 27,621
    Range: 4,000 - 59,721
    Miami-Dade: 30,200 total; 16,500 ADA-eligible
  - Average number of daily trips: 3,461
    Range: 233 – 6,400
    Miami-Dade: 2,357
  - Average cost per trip: $24.94
    Range: $15.28 - $44.79
    Miami-Dade: $18.05

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- Survey results (cont'd)
    - 7 jurisdictions provide curb-to-curb service. 11, including Miami-Dade, exceed ADA requirements and provide door-to-door service. Minneapolis, MN, provides door-through-door service
    - 13 jurisdictions base para transit hours of operation on specific fixed route schedules. Miami-Dade County and 5 other jurisdictions provide longer service hours

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- Positive Findings
    - Our cost per para transit trip is lower than most jurisdictions
        - $18.05 Miami-Dade vs. $24.94 overall average
    - Miami-Dade's level of service is good in comparison to ADA requirements overall and in comparison to other jurisdictions
        - Hours of operation
        - Service area
        - Door-to-door service

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- **Areas of Improvement**
  - Implement other methods of fare payment
    - Monthly pass (Seattle, WA and Philadelphia, PA)
    - Pre-paid account from which fares are deducted (Santa Clara, CA)
  - Consider fare option
    - In 7 jurisdictions – fare is less than 2x fixed route fare
    - Miami-Dade fare, $2.50 per trip is one of the higher rates charged to para transit riders

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- **Business Model Trends**
  - **In-house Operation**
    - Most expensive, most control
    - Not necessarily better service or performance management
  - **Multiple Providers (No Broker)**
    - Least expensive according our survey
    - Requires agency oversight of multiple contractors
  - **Broker/Multiple Provider**
    - Expertise of broker may improve service at lower cost
    - Agency is distanced from direct provision and assessment of para transit service
  - **No Business Model is considered Best Practice**

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- **Customer Service Successful Practices**
  - Annual customer surveys
  - Postage-paid comment cards in vehicles
  - Riders may provide feedback via phone, fax, and e-mail
  - Conduct random customer focus groups and telephone surveys
  - 'Mystery riders' test service from reservation to drop-off
  - Monitor passenger travel time

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- Outreach and Marketing Successful Practices
  - Driver training requirements include first-aid, CPR, sensitivity training and defensive driving
  - Driver training includes initial 80 hours to begin transport duties and an additional 16 hours of refresher courses at various intervals
  - Provide personal mobility trainers to help para transit riders use the fixed route system without affecting para transit eligibility
  - Complaints resolution in three days, with a personal call to rider from contractor or agency

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- Operations Oversight and Performance Monitoring Successful Practices
  - Contract managers conduct unannounced visits to providers
  - Allow contractors to correct service issue problems before assessing damages
  - Frequent meetings with contractors to express concerns and give feedback about overall performance
  - Focus performance monitoring efforts on overall customer experience

OPI Jurisdiction Survey

- Technology Improvements Successful Practices
  - Automated scheduling, cancellation and confirmation of rides
  - Real time tracking of vehicles in the field
  - In general, technology considered an increasingly important tool for accurately monitoring service to customers

Recommendations

- Recommendations for service improvements include:
    - Business and Operational Model
    - Customer Service
    - Outreach Program
    - Oversight and Performance Monitoring
    - Technology Improvements

Business and Operational Model

- Use a broker/multiple provider business model. Consider contracting a not-for-profit broker

- Determine if the County desires providers to operate in zones. Review zone structure to maximize efficiency

- Extend capacity by making back-up services more reliable and available. Also, in future solicitations, consider specifying minimum fleet sizes for a provider to qualify in any zone

- Investigate securing additional funding for training, outreach and new technology programs

Customer Service

- Expand education programs to improve understanding of STS, its aims, operating policies and system limitations

- Consider offering fare discounts to children under 12

- Establish group training/orientation programs for STS riders, specifically new riders

- Eliminate confusion between negotiated pickup time and scheduled pickup time. Implement the proposal to change the pick up window. Do not extend the pick-up window past 30 minutes

- Improve driver training (80 hours of initial training and 16 refresher hours), operator, scheduler and dispatcher training and establish acceptable performance standards

Customer Service (Cont.)

- Increase call-taking efficiency by upgrading telephone, computer and database systems

- Perform a comprehensive review of complaint handling. Reduce the response time to 7-days from date of complaint until complainant receives a response.

- Institute additional and convenient methods of fare collection and trip verification (see technology recommendations)

- Revise trip verification procedures to include quality of service verification

- Review the procedures for purging the eligible riders list and establish standard renewal procedures

Outreach Program

- Develop a new riders' orientation program

- Expand outreach and Transit marketing to increase rider education and use of the service

- When placing callers on hold, provide useful announcements about STS, instead of music or total silence

Oversight and Performance Monitoring

- Centralize management of driver, staff, operator and dispatcher training. Standardize training programs for each group

- Ensure adherence to contract provisions for three-way calls (rider, operator and driver) for "where is my ride" requests

- Develop a process of investigating providers' claims for waiver of liquidated damages for delays caused by unforeseen circumstances

- Independently monitor contract performance. (Performance should be less dependent on the number of official complaints)

- Require brokers/providers to prepare and execute corrective action plans where performance has fallen below targets

Technology Improvements

- Upgrade MDTA's call center technologies and associated computing capabilities

- Upgrade computing and database systems to improve office efficiency and institute remote computing to support enhanced field contract monitoring

- Use modern computer technologies to improve scheduling and routing, automate vehicle location, and allow for real time trip status updates

- Implement computer based trip verification systems such as flash pass, swipe cards, thumb prints etc.

Alternate Funding Sources

- Examples of Funding Sources Include:
  - Bush Administration New Freedom Initiative Program
  - Community Development Block Grant Program

Next Steps

- Develop a timeline to complete the RFP

- Finalize the delivery model required to be used in STS

- Determine if the model will include zones. If so define zones

- Revise Performance standards

- Revise oversight methodologies

- Develop the draft contract to be included in the RFP

- Develop evaluation and selection criteria

- Complete the RFP for Commission approval

Acknowledgements

- STS Riders
- CDTIC and the Human Services Coalition
- CODI
- CTAC
- ADA Office
- ATC Intelitran
- Transportation providers
- MDTA Staff

Attachments

- Attachment I:
  - User Survey
- Attachment II:
  - Jurisdictions Survey
- Attachment III:
  - Summary Recommendations
  - Issues and Recommendations